



August 28, 2007

Honorable Phil Isenberg, Chair  
and Members, Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force  
1416 Ninth St., Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Isenberg and Members of the Task Force:

The Contra Costa Council has followed with great interest the evolving visions to address the crisis affecting the Delta and how they might mitigate the potential impacts on our region and state. We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the alternative visions and on proposed immediate actions.

#### Alternative Visions

As articulated in our Statement of Principles, the Council believes that any solution must be comprehensive and consider the numerous assets of the Delta. The Principles identify the following objectives:

- Protect public health and safety
- Provide a reliable supply of high quality water
- Protect infrastructure in the Delta
- Protect economic assets of the Delta
- Protect the environmental health of the estuary
- Develop a regulatory framework that will protect ecosystem health, water quality and reliability

As you discuss and weigh alternative visions and actions, we urge you to do so in the context of our Statement of Principles.

Based on careful review of the alternative visions forwarded to your Task Force by the Stakeholder Coordinating Group, we offer these comments. We believe that the staged action approach described in the “Resilient Adaptive Delta” vision to direct flows in selected conveyance channels to the export pumps is a rational approach to testing each action in a sequential way for its effectiveness in ensuring a reliable water supply. Isolating and managing Old River for aquatic habitat will address our goal of protecting the Delta ecosystem, provided the measures that protect water quality for Contra Costa Water District and other in-Delta water users are implemented, as the Stakeholder Group recommends. We also support protecting critical infrastructure in the Delta, including roads, railroads and utility transmission. We strongly endorse the emphasis on emergency preparedness, including strategic stockpiling of materials and projects that protect aquatic species and improve water quality – which should begin immediately. As any of these actions are taken, protecting the Delta must be a high priority.

There are four areas where we recommend that additional and/or stronger language be incorporated into the vision.

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#### Governance

Consistent with our Principles, the success of any Delta solution will rely upon establishing a regulatory framework that will protect ecosystem health and water quality and reliability. This calls for an independent regulatory body that has the legal authority and accountability to regulate and assure applicable water quality and environmental standards are met in the Delta. Other stakeholders, including appropriate state and federal agencies, must be participants and must be accountable for implementing the actions in a timely fashion, especially immediate actions that address the most critical issues. The regulatory framework should be based on seasonally adjusted Delta outflow criteria into San Francisco Bay to assure continuous outflow through the Delta. Only with this kind of governance structure that assures implementation can we be assured that all agencies will be aligned and moving in the direction of a total solution.

#### Flood Routing

While the visions address upstream flood management, a more comprehensive effort is needed to assure peak flood flows through the Delta will not exacerbate an existing weak levee system. Any physical improvements or barriers will redirect flood flows through the remaining channels. Those peak flood flows could increase scouring velocities further weakening the levees. Before investing in dry weather water management facilities, the peak flood flow routing system must be in place to protect upstream and in-Delta property from flooding and avoid resultant public safety and property damage dangers.

#### Storage

Storage must be integrated into any final plan for the Delta. Our Principles point out that additional storage, both surface and groundwater, is essential to managing the Delta with flexibility that will ensure both a reliable supply of quality drinking water and a healthy ecosystem. To be effective, storage must be located closer to the end users, i.e. near the Delta intakes and the export pumps. The ability to regulate flows through the Delta is dependent on storage with operating criteria for timed release into the Delta. Storage is critical not just to the in-Delta users, but also to those areas that rely upon exports from the export pumps. With the current system, in years of high water flows water exports were low. Conversely, in years of low water flows exports were high. This is not an effective system for providing ecosystem health and a reliable water supply. Storage can alleviate this dilemma.

#### Levee Repair

To ensure that water supplies from the Delta and ecosystem health are minimally affected by catastrophic levee failures, we strongly recommend that the State invest in improvements to the western and central Delta levees. Funds from Propositions 84 and 1E should be allocated to these critical levees that protect water quality, infrastructure and public health and safety. This work should begin without delay.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely yours,

Linda Best  
President and CEO